ULYSSES

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POEMS.

PAOLO AND FRANCESCA.

HEROD.

ULYSSES

A DRAMA IN A PROLOGUE & THREE ACTS

BY

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

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TO

JAMES KNOWLES

WITH GRATITUDE AND REGARD

I DEDICATE

THIS PLAY

CHARACTERS

ON OLYMPUS

ZEUS (*Jupiter*), with thunderbolt.
POSEIDON (*Neptune*), with trident.
HERMES (*Mercury*), with caduceus and winged sandals.
ATHENE (*Minerva*), with spear, shield and ægis.
APHRODITE (*Venus*), with roses and doves.

ARES (*Mars*), with spear and shield; APOLLO, with lyre; HEPHÆSTUS (*Vulcan*), with hammer and pincers; DEMETER (*Ceres*), with cornsheaf, wreath and veil; HESTIA (*Vesta*), with veil and sceptre; ARTEMIS (*Diana*), with bow and quiver; GANYMEDE, cupbearer to the gods.

ON EARTH

ATHENE.
HERMES.
CALYPSO, the Nymph of the Island Ogygia.

ULYSSES.
PENELOPE, his wife.
TELEMACHUS, his son.
EURYCLEIA, his old nurse.
ANTINOUS (young, insolent, splendid) }
EURYMACHUS (mature, politic, specious) } Chief Suitors to PENELOPE.
CTESIPPUS (elderly, rich, ridiculous) }
EUMÆUS, a swineherd.
MELANTHIUS, a goatherd.

PEIRÆUS, a steward.

PHEIDON, a gardener.

MELANTHO, CLYTIE, CHLORIS — handmaidens.

ELPENOR, PHOCION — sailors.

SUITORS, HANDMAIDENS, ATTENDANTS, SEA-NYMPHS, SAILORS, ETC.

IN HADES

ULYSSES.

HERMES.

GHOSTS OF PHÆDRA, EURYDICE, SUICIDES, LOVERS, AND CHILDREN.

CHARON.

GHOST OF TEIRESIAS (a prophet).

GHOST OF AGAMEMNON.

GHOST OF ANTICLEIA (the mother of Ulysses).

FURIES: TANTALUS, SISYPHUS, PROMETHEUS.

PROLOGUE

ULYSSES

PROLOGUE

The curtain rising discloses the summit of Olympus, an amphitheatre of marble hills in a glimmering light of dawn: where the hills fall away, a distant view of the world, with countries and rivers, is seen far below. Near the front are the seats of the gods, cut in an irregular semicircle in the rock. As the scene progresses the morning light grows clearer, descending gradually from the mountain summit over the figures of the assembled gods. In the centre, ZEUS, *with the empty seat of* HERA *beside him; to his right* ATHENE,

APOLLO, ARTEMIS, HERMES, *and* HESTIA; *to his left* POSEIDON, DEMETER, ARES, APHRODITE, *and* HEPHÆSTUS.

ATHENE. [*Comes forward with outstretched arms.*] Father, whose oath in hollow hell is heard;
Whose act is lightning after thunder-word;
A boon! a boon! that I compassion find
For one, the most unhappy of mankind.

ZEUS. How is he named?

ATH. Ulysses.

[POSEIDON *starts forward, but is checked by* ZEUS.

He who planned
To take the towered city of Troy-land;
A mighty spearsman, and a seaman wise,
A hunter, and at need a lord of lies.
With woven wiles he stole the Trojan town
Which ten years' battle could not batter down:
Oft hath he made sweet sacrifice to thee.

ZEUS. [*Nodding benevolently.*] I mind me of the savoury smell.

ATH. Yet he,
When all the other captains had won home,
Was whirled about the wilderness of foam;
For the wind and the wave have driven him evermore
Mocked by the green of some receding shore;
Yet over wind and wave he had his will,
Blistered and buffeted; unbaffled still.
Ever the snare was set, ever in vain;
The Lotus Island and the Siren strain;
Through Scylla and Charybdis hath he run,
Sleeplessly plunging to the setting sun.
Who hath so suffered, or so far hath sailed,
So much encountered, and so little quailed?

ZEUS. What wouldst thou?

ATH. This! that he at last may view
The smoke of his own fire upcurling blue.

POSEIDON. [*Starting forward with menacing gesture.*] Father of Gods, this man hath stricken blind
My dear son Polyphemus, and with wind,
With tempest and a roaring wall of waves,
I fling him backward from the shore he craves.

Sire! if this insolence unpunished go
We soon shall lack all reverence below;
It will be said, 'The arm of Zeus doth shake,
Let none henceforward at his thunder quake!'

[ZEUS *moves uneasily.*

This man is mine! [*Strikes trident on ground.*]
By me let him be hurled
From sea to sea, and dashed about the world!

ATH. Hath not Ulysses through such travail trod
As might appease even anger of a god?
Monarch of monstrous rage—

[*With furious gesture at* POSEIDON.

Thou who dost launch
The crested seas in streaming avalanche!
Lord of the indiscriminate earthquake throe,
Of huge and random elemental blow,
Thou who dost drink up ships, and swallow down
Alike the pious and the impious town,
Whose causeless fury maketh men mistrust
If there be gods, or if those gods be just;

Thy rancour is eternal as thy life,
Thy genius ruin, and thy being strife!

POS. [*Tauntingly.*] And thou, demure defender of chaste lives,
Smooth patroness of virgins and of wives,
I'll pluck from thee the veil thy craft doth wear,
The secret burning of thy heart declare.
Thy marble front of maidenhood conceals
Such wandering passion as a wanton feels.
What is thy heavenly sympathy but this,
To find occasion for Ulysses' kiss?
I will proclaim thee to Olympus—

[POSEIDON *and* ATHENE *start forward threatening each other with trident and lance.*

ZEUS. Peace,
Children, and from your shrill reviling cease!
Do thou, Poseidon, for thy part, revere
The dower of her divinity severe:
And, daughter, gird not at his gloomier might,
His spoil of morning wrecks from furious night.
Endowed is he with violence by that law
Which gives thee wisdom—and thy father awe.

ATH. Of reverence speak'st thou? Then Ulysses urge
Back to his home irreverence to scourge;
There weeps his wife Penelope, hard driven
By men who spurn at law and laugh at heaven.
A swarm of impious wooers waste his halls,
Devour his substance and corrupt his thralls:
They cry about her that her lord is dead,
They bay around her for the marriage bed—

ZEUS. [*Solemnly.*] Ulysses shall return!

POS. [*Starting forward.*] Cloud-gatherer, stay!

ZEUS. Yet canst thou work him mischief on the way.
In thy moist province none can interfere;
There thou alone art lord, as I am here.
Where bides the man?

ATH. Calypso this long while
Detains him in her languorous ocean-isle,
Ogygia, green on the transparent deep.
There did she hush his spirit into sleep,
And all his wisdom swoons beneath the charm
Of her deep bosom and her glimmering arm.

Release him, sire, from soft Calypso's wile,
And dreamy bondage on the Witching Isle.

ZEUS. [*Oracularly.*] Go, Hermes, and unweave her magic art.
Then let him choose; to linger, or depart.
Yet ere he touch at last his native shore,
Ulysses must abide one labour more.

ATHENE. Say! say!

ZEUS. The shadowy region must he tread,
And breathing pace, amid the breathless dead,
The track of terror and the slope of gloom,
To learn from ghosts the tidings of his doom.

ATH. O spare him, Father, spare him—

ZEUS. He must go
From dalliance to the dolorous realm below.

ATH. Remember, sire, she snared with spells his will,
But his deep heart for home is hungering still.

HERMES. [*Mischievously, pointing at* APOLLO.]
And, sire, remember, we are gods, yet we
From human frailties were not ever free.
If even immortals genially stray,

Shall we be merciless to mortal clay?
But lately the sun-god himself was seen
Snatching at Daphne's robe upon the green.

APHRODITE. [*With soft insinuation.*] And even thou, O Father—in thy youth—
Didst feel, at least for mortal women, ruth.
To Leda, Leto, Danaë, we are told,
Didst show thee on occasion tender—

[ZEUS *thunders softly. General suppressed laughter among the gods* ZEUS *thunders loudly: all the gods abase themselves.*

ZEUS. Hold!
'Tis true that earthly women had their share
In this large bosom's universal care,
That Danaë, Leda, Leto, all had place
In my most broad beneficent embrace:
True that we gods who on Olympus dwell
With mortal passion sympathise too well.

[*Sighs deeply.*

But, daughter, 'tis not I that do impose
Upon Ulysses this the last of woes.

I to no higher wisdom make pretence
Than to expound eternal sapience.
It is that power which rules us as with rods,
Lord above lords and god behind the gods;
Fate hath decreed Ulysses should abide
More toils and fiercer than all men beside:
Heavily homeward must he win his way
Through lure, through darkness, anguish, and delay.

ATH. Yet swear he shall return!

ZEUS. If he can dare
Through shadow of the grave to reach the air.

ATH. Then swear it by the Styx!

ZEUS. I swear it.

[*Rolling thunder is heard beneath.*

HERM. Hark!
'Tis ratified by rivers of the dark!

ATH. I'll to Telemachus his son, and fire
His heart to prove him worthy of his sire.

[*To* HERMES.

Thou to Ogygia in the violet sea,
To touch Ulysses and to set him free.

[*Exit* ATHENE.

POS. And I, Ulysses, will thy bark waylay!
And though thou must return, thou shalt not say
Thou wast afflicted lightly on the way.

[*Exit* POSEIDON.

ZEUS. [*To* HERMES.] Hermes, command Calypso to release
Ulysses, and to waft him over seas;
Yet she shall not forewarn him that his fate
Permits him homeward but through Hades' gate.

[*Exit* HERMES.

[*To* GANYMEDE.] The cup, bright Ganymede! Ah, from the first
The guiding of this globe engendered thirst.

[ZEUS *drinks: Olympus fades.*

ACT I

ACT I

SCENE I

Forecourt of the palace of ULYSSES *at Ithaca, with stone seats disposed around it. Towards one side, the front of the palace, with portico and pediment richly decorated in the Mycenæan style. Separated from this, a building containing the women's apartments, from a gallery in which a flight of stairs leads down into the court. A boundary wall encloses both buildings: in the interval between them, the mountains of Ithaca are seen above the wall. To the right a low colonnade, over which appear the trees of the orchard—apples, pears, figs, etc., with a great vine trailing into the court. In the court, a scene of wild laughter, uproar, and prodigal confusion: some of the* SUITORS *dancing in*

abandonment with the HANDMAIDENS, *while others pour out of the central door of the palace to join the rout.* TELEMACHUS *is seen sitting moodily apart. At last the dance ends in breathless disorder.*

ANTINOUS. Come, Clytie, I have no breath left, sit on my knee and drink from this cup! No! I'll have fresh wine. [*Pours it on floor.*] A fresh jar.

CTESIPPUS. Now may the Lady Penelope defer her answer so long as she pleases. This way of life suits me. [*A* HANDMAID *empties cup of wine over him.*] Fetch up fresh jars from the cool earth!

MELANTHO. [*Entering from door in wall to left of house, and holding up key.*] I have the keys of the great wine vault.

PEIRÆUS. Ah! you have stolen my keys! How shall I meet Ulysses!

[*Everyone laughs.*

MEL. Come with me, some of you, and bring up fresh jars.

[*Exit* MELANTHO *with three* SUITORS.

Enter three HANDMAIDS, *loaded with flowers and branches of fruit — figs, apples, pears, grapes, pomegranates, followed by* PHEIDON.

CHLORIS. See! see! we have stripped the great orchard. Here! here!

[*They fling fruits and flowers over* SUITORS.

PHEIDON. Princes, princes! Years and years have I tended these plants and trees, and in a moment they are torn up, and all the fruitage of the summer squandered. Ah! if my master should return!

CTES. That need not trouble you.

[*All laugh.*

[*A wild scene of flinging fruits and red, white and purple flowers ensues.*

Re-enter MELANTHO *and* SUITORS, *rolling fresh jars of wine.*

ANTIN. Break off the necks, and let the wine

run on the floors—I'll cool my feet; and drench this wreath again! Ulysses is dead, or if he live, we are masters here to-day.

[*Jars are broken, wine flows on floor.*

ALL. Ha! ha! ha!

Enter EURYCLEIA, *the old nurse, followed by two faithful* HANDMAIDS *bearing work-baskets, etc.*

EURYCL. O, you vile handmaidens! that sit on princes' knees and drink the wine of your master who was ever kind to you.

GIRLS. La! la! la! la! la!

EURYCL. Oh! may you never come to a husband's bed! but wither unwooed to the grave!

ANTIN. The old dame is envious! Here, Ctesippus, you still lack a damsel. Take her and comfort her! Kiss her, kiss her, Ctesippus!

EURYCL. Wiser to let her be!

[*They drag* CTESIPPUS *to* EURYCLEIA *and push him towards her.*

CTES. Her time is past—young lips for a man of my spirit.

MEL. Men reach not for withered apples!

CLYT. Parchment face!

MEL. You skin hung in the wind to dry!

ALL. Ha! ha! ha!

EURYCL. O! when Ulysses shall return—

ALL. Ha! ha! ha!

EURYCL. For return he shall—

ALL. Ha! ha! ha! ha!

EURYCL. O! then may he not spare you, women though ye are, but strike you down with the men—fools! wantons! thieves!

MEL. [*To faithful* HANDMAIDS.] Why slave under that bitter hag when you can have the kisses and the gold of princes?

ANTIN. What would he do—one man amongst us all?

EURYCL. Kill you! kill you! kill you! Ulysses! Ulysses!

[*She is hustled off.*

Enter other SUITORS *dragging in* EUMÆUS, *the swineherd.*

SUITOR. Here is the man who sends us the lean swine.

ANTIN. Bring him before me!

EUM. Princes, I am but a serving-man and have respect unto my lords. Shall I serve up a dish that would poison the great princes?

ANTIN. Poison us?

CTES. [*Turning pale.*] What does he say?

EUM. My lords, a fever is fallen upon the swine! To eat them were death.

CTES. Ah! ah!

A SUITOR. What, what, Ctesippus!

CTES. Ah! the pain! the pain! I am poisoned!

[*All laugh.*

Do I swell? do I swell already?

SUITORS. [*With mock solemnity.*] Farewell, farewell, Ctesippus, thy death is on thee!

CTES. Help me within doors! Ah! ah!

[*Exit* CTESIPPUS, *supported by* HANDMAIDENS.]

ANTIN. [*To* EUMÆUS.] This is a lie!

EUM. There are but two left of the whole herd, and already I like not the countenance of one of them!

ANTIN. It is a lie to keep us from our food

MELANTHIUS. [*Obsequiously.*] Believe him not, most noble Antinous! But I, it is my pleasure to bring you what I have; fat kids; sweet morsels for my noble lords. He hath hidden the swine away, most mighty Antinous.

ANTIN. Go, drag him out, and drive in the swine.

SUITORS. Come, come: show us the swine!

EUM. And so I will. [*Aside.*] But not the fat ones.

[*Exeunt* EUMÆUS *and* SUITORS.

ANTIN. [*To* SERVANTS *within.*] A fresh feast, and swiftly!

[*To* SUITORS *and* HANDMAIDS.]

Meantime a brief sleep, for the sun bears heavily on us. Come, Clytie, my head on your lap.

A SUITOR. And you with me, Melantho.

[*The* SUITORS *lie down in various attitudes with the* HANDMAIDENS.

Re-enter CTESIPPUS, *who starts in horror.*

Weak, weak! How have I raged and fumed
in vain,
And pondered on the doing! Now to do!

[*He starts up.*

[*During the ensuing speech of* TELEMACHUS, *the* SUITORS *gradually awake and rise, some stretching themselves and yawning.*

Antinous and Eurymachus, and the rest!
Too long have I borne to see you snatch and
spoil,
And eat and swill, and gibe and ravish. Now,
Now from this moment I'll stand master here;
Lord of my own hall, ruler of this hearth.
I'll flit no more a phantom at your feasts,
Discouraged and discarded and disdained.
I am the son of him whom all men feared
And if he live I hold his place in trust;
If he be dead I stand up in his room.
Now on the instant, out! out at the doors!

[ANTINOUS *yawns loudly.*

CTES. Are we awake, or do we all still
dream?

TELEM. Take wing, you vultures that too long have perched!
Hence, hence, you rats that gnaw my father's grain.

EURYM. I rub my eyes: is this Telemachus?

TELEM. I'll have no tarrying! Out, out ere ye wake!
The spirit of my sire descends on me,
And 'tis Ulysses that cries out on you;
You by the throat, Antinous, I take.

[*He makes towards* ANTINOUS, *who still holds* CLYTIE *in his arms, while she laughs impudently at* TELEMACHUS.

ANTIN. Softly, sir, softly! Clytie, do not laugh,
This is your lord!

CTES. I like to see such mettle!

EURYM. Be not too rough with him, Antinous!

ANTIN. A moment, sir, before you cast us out—

[*He laughs, as do the others till he recovers himself.*

Before you cast us out—as easily
Doubtless you could !

A SUITOR. We are helpless and o'er-matched !

EURYM. Sad Ithaca, when such a tyrant rules !

CTES. Reach down thy father's bow and shoot us dead !

TELEM. [*To himself, while* EURYMACHUS *and other* SUITORS *at back are consulting in whispers how to deal with him.*]
Fool, fool ! I have but made myself a jest :
It was not thus Athene meant. Fool, fool !

EURYM. [*Coming forward to* TELEMACHUS *from others at back.*] One word ! You say that we devour your halls,
That we are vultures, rats. Yet answer this,
Do we bide here, then, of our own inclining ?
We come to woo your mother—are your guests,
And we would have an answer ere we go !

ALL. An answer, yes !

ANTIN. [*Starting up.*] An answer from her lips,

Which one of us she chooses for a husband.
Have we not seen moon kindle after moon
And still she puts us by! How long, how long!

TELEM. Eurymachus, I have blustered windy threats;
But 'tis a grievous office thus to sit
A master and no master in my halls,
And still I say you do me injury,
Devouring thus the substance of my sire!

ANTIN. Then let your mother make her choice of us!
Would she have strength and splendour of the limbs,
Sap of the body and youth's burning blood,
I little doubt on whom her choice will fall.

EURYM. Nor I—would she have prudence in her lord
And craft.

CTES. And I say nothing, but I know
A woman before prudence chooseth gold.

ANTIN. [*Striking table.*] And till she answer, none, not Zeus himself
Nor all the gods shall turn me out of door.

EURYM. Come, drink, Telemachus; we wish thee well.
'Tis difficult for thee: I'd be thy friend.
Come, lad! [*Putting his arm about* TELEMACHUS.]

TELEM. I'll not drink with you. What to do?

EURYM. Now that this little tempest is o'erblown,
Sing to us, minstrel, and chase wrath away.
Come and sit near to me, Telemachus.

CTES. [*In lachrymose manner.*] Sing, minstrel, sing us now a tender song
Of meeting and parting, with the moon in it;
I feel that I could love as I loved once.

[*Sighs deeply. All laugh.*

MINSTREL. O set the sails, for Troy, for Troy is fallen,
And Helen cometh home;
O set the sails, and all the Phrygian winds
Breathe us across the foam!
O set the sails unto the golden West!
It is o'er, the bitter strife.

At last the father cometh to the son,
And the husband to the wife!
[*During this song* PENELOPE *has softly descended, accompanied by two* HANDMAIDS, *and stands listening unnoticed. She holds her veil before her face.*

And she shall fall upon his heart
With never a spoken word—

PEN. [*Dropping veil.*] Cease, minstrel, cease, and sing some other song;
Thy music floated up into my room,
And the sweet words of it have hurt my heart.
Others return, the other husbands, but
Never for me that sail on the sea-line,
Never a sound of oars beneath the moon,
Nor sudden step beside me at midnight:
Never Ulysses! Either he is drowned
Or his bones lie on the mainland in the rain.
[*The* SUITORS *gather around her admiringly and importunately.*

ANTIN. Lady, he sang to chase away our wrath.

Thy son, Telemachus, upbraids us all
That we stay here too long, and cries, 'Out! out!'
But we await your answer, still deferred:
Deferred from day to day, from month to month.
I, I at least no longer will be fooled,
Whose pent and flooding passion foams at bars.
Choose one of us, and they—the rest—will go!

PEN. Ah! sirs, remember that I but delay
To choose till I have woven at the loom
A shroud for old Laertes.

MELAN. O my mistress!
How canst thou stand and lie to noble men?
O princes, I have spied on her, and she
At night unravels what she wrought by day.
Ye'll wait a long time if for this ye wait.

PEN. Melantho! I was ever kind to you.

ANTIN. We are tricked then!

ALL. We are duped!

EURYM. O she is subtle!

PEN. Princes, you drive me like a hunted thing
To feint and double thus.

CTES. A game they play!
The mother fools us and the son reviles us.
She thinks us asses, and he calls us rats.
Am I then like a vulture or a rat?

TELEM. Mother, 'tis true I did upbraid them all;
I am called master here, but am no master;
Lord, but I rule not! smiled at and passed by,
A shadow while these men usurp my halls.

EURYM. [*Going to* TELEMACHUS, *and laying hand on his shoulder.*] Lady, indeed your son hath much excuse,
And for his sake I'd urge you to make answer,
For his sake and the sake of this dear land,
Which lies now with defenceless coast, a rabble
Leaderless, laws and altars overturned.
Let then your son rise in his father's room.

CTES. Let the boy take the reins and drive: but thou
Depart with one of us; and better sure
A live Ctesippus than a dead Ulysses.

EURYM. [*Pointing to* TELEMACHUS.] Thy duty points thee to thy son that lives!

PEN. Is it so, child, this brooding on a dream
Hath kept thee from thy kingdom? I am wrapt
So in my husband I forget my son.

TELEM. Mother, although my office here is hard,
Yet would I rather lie out by the door,
Cursed, spat on, offal thrown to me for food,
Than any grief of mine should hasten you
To answer with your lips but not your heart,
Or be the cause of your departing hence.

PEN. And yet I see 'tis so, and that dear ghost
Excludes the living child: forgive me, son.
[*To the* SUITORS.] Yet, sirs, I cannot on the instant choose:
I lose your faces in the thought of him.
Not on the instant—give me a brief space!
Then will I choose as husband one of you.

CTES. Though she looked straight before her didst thou see
How her eye wandered toward me?

EURYM. She looked not
On me: that argues in a woman love.

ANTIN. See, the young moon hath not begun to quicken,
And on the evening hangs awaiting life.
We'll give thee time till yonder moon is full:
Then shalt thou choose from us. Till then! No more.

PEN. I will do so.

TELEM. Mother, think not that I—

PEN. My child, I have no blame for you at all.

EURYM. [*To* SUITORS.] Thy answer, then, when that faint moon is full!

ANTIN. I challenge any here to hurl the quoit: To the market-place.

EURYM. Haste, then, ere it grow dark.

[TELEMACHUS *again comes forward to* PENELOPE.

PEN. Go with them, child! Nay, thou hast done no wrong.

[*Exeunt all but* PENELOPE, *who stands stretching out her arms in the darkening twilight.*

Where art thou, husband? Dost thou lie even now

Helpless with coral, and swaying as the sea
sways?
Or dost thou live, and art with magic held
By some strange woman on a lone sea isle?
Yet we are bound more close than by a
charm;
By fireside plans and counsel in the dawn—
Like gardeners have we watched a growing
child.
Thy son is tall, thou wilt be glad of him;
All is in order; by the fire thy chair,
Thy bed is smoothed, but now these hands have
left it.
Thou knowest the long years I have not quailed,
True to a vision, steadfast to a dream,
Indissolubly married to remembrance;
But now I am so driven I faint at last!
Why must my beauty madden all these wolves?
Why have the gods thus guarded my first
bloom?
Why am I fresh, why young, if not for thee?
Come! come, Ulysses! Burn back through the
world!

Come take the broad seas in one mighty leap,
And rush upon this bosom with a cry,
Ere 'tis too late, at the last, last instant—come!

[*Again the* MINSTREL'S *song is heard as the scene changes.*

SCENE II

The shore of Ogygia with the sea-cave of Calypso. A vine full of fruit trails over one side of the cave, and round about it grow whispering poplars and alders, from under which rillets of water run to the sea. Beyond, a verdant shore, with thickets of oleander, etc., and the ship of ULYSSES *lying beached. Within the cave a fire burning gives out the smell of sawn cedar and sandal-wood. The sun behind is sinking, and the water is golden, while over all broods a magic light. A chorus of*

OCEAN-NYMPHS *is discovered dancing and singing on the sands.*

Enter along the shore ULYSSES *and* CALYPSO.

CAL. Art thou content then, utterly content?
ULYS. I'll drift no more upon the dreary sea.
No yearning have I now, and no desire.
Here would I be, at ease upon this isle
Set in the glassy ocean's azure swoon,
With sward of parsley and of violet,
And poplars shivering in a silvery dream,
And smell of cedar sawn, and sandal-wood,
And these low-crying birds that haunt the deep.
CAL. Thy home then? Hast no thought of it at all?
ULYS. It seemeth to me like a far, faint place.
CAL. Rememberest thou thy wife?
ULYS. [*Dreamily.*] As through a mist:
And dim she seems, and muffled, and away.
Those crimson lips again! O eyes half-closed,
That closing slowly draw my soul from me!
Thou fallest back, thy hair blows in my face,
And all the odour goeth to my brain.

CAL. Come! I would have thee sleep upon this bank
Till the first star shall light us to our couch
Of o'erblown roses and of fallen leaves.

[*She leads* ULYSSES *out and he lies upon a bank.*

Thy purple cloak, wilt have it so, or so?
Now sleep, my love: thou canst not go from me.

[*She returns and passes within the cave.*

[*Calling the* NYMPHS *about her.*

The golden shuttle and the violet wool:
And all ye nymphs sing to me while I spin.

NYMPHS. [*Singing.*] From the green heart of the waters
We, old ocean's daughters,
Have floated up with mortal men to play;
Out of the green translucent night
Up to the purple earthly light,
To dance with creatures of a day.
For alas! we have seen the sailor asleep
Where the anchor rusts on the ooze of the deep,
But never, never before

Have we seen a mortal dance on the long sea-
shore.

HERM. [*Appearing unseen by* CALYPSO *and her* NYMPHS, *and standing over* ULYSSES *where he lies asleep.*] Ulysses, thralled by passion this long while,
I lift from thee the glamour of this isle.
Olympian wisdom bids thee waken free
Of white Calypso's glimmering witchery.
Behold, I raise from thee the magic woe:
[*Touching him with caduceus.*
Now lies it in thyself to stay or go.

[HERMES *stands aside and watches* ULYSSES, *who, slowly awakening, begins to gaze and stretch out his arms over the sea.*

NYMPHS. [*Perceiving* ULYSSES *from the mouth of the cave and singing.*]
See, see Ulysses, weary and wise;
Sing low, sing low with downcast eyes;
For he rouses at last,
And his eyes are cast

To the land where his spirit would be,
Over the violet sea.
Alas for the arms that yearn!
Alas for the eyes that burn!
Ulysses—Ulysses—ah!

[*They all start up as* HERMES *steps suddenly amongst them.*

CAL. Hermes, I know thee, though too rarely seen;
What is your will with me? Art thou from Zeus?
Some word of Zeus thou bringest; let me hear.

HERM. Lady, who sitteth there upon the shore?

CAL. It is Ulysses. Ah, 'tis not of him?

HERM. There sits the man of whom I came to speak.

CAL. Say then!

HERM. Thus Zeus commands: that you set free
Ulysses.

CAL. Ah!

HERM. And waft him on the deep,
If in his heart he hungers for his home.

CAL. He is most happy and forgets his home.

HERM. Yet if he shall desire at last his hearth—

CAL. He will not—no!-

HERM. Then shalt thou waft his sails.

CAL. He shall not go!

HERM. But Zeus commands.

CAL. I say
He will not care to go, doth not desire;
To leave me hath not entered in his heart.
Yet will I set him free if he so choose;
But I am sure of him.

HERM. And he shall have
More peril being gone, down into hell
Must pass, and view the hollow night of things.

CAL. This will I tell him.

HERM. No! for Zeus forbids.
Farewell, Calypso—linger I may not.

[*Exit* HERMES.

CAL. I cannot doubt thee, and the spell was strong.

[*She goes to the door of the cave and calls* ULYSSES *three times. At last he hears and rises, then comes slowly down to her rubbing his eyes like one awakening from a trance.*

CAL. Art thou Ulysses that so slowly comest?
Who hath bewitched thee that thou gazest past me?
And thou wert wont to rush into my arms!

[*She leads him within the cave—* ULYSSES *still seeming numbed and changed.*

Ulysses, there hath been a god with me,
A messenger from Zeus. Come from the shadow,
That I may see your face. Thus Zeus commands:
'If sad Ulysses yearns to see his home—'

[*He starts and gazes again seaward.*

Ah! you would go then! back the bright blood comes,
And to your eyes the sea-light!

ULYS. Goddess—I—

CAL. 'If sad Ulysses burns to see his home,'
Then Zeus commands me that I let you go.
Ah! set your teeth upon your lips: but still
I hear wild music at your heart.

ULYS. [*Beginning to recover and realise.*]
O whence
Comes this release—or—this command of Zeus?

CAL. O spoil it not! then thus comes this release.
The gods have pity on you, seeing you
Unwillingly beguiled by cold Calypso.
And more; I am to swell your aching sails,
And breathe you with a breeze over the deep:
Only if you desire—'tis in your will.
Well! well! Why do you gaze so in my eyes?

ULYS. I have learned to dread what cometh suddenly,
And sniff about a sweet thing like a hound:
And most I dread the sudden gifts of gods.

CAL. Gifts!

ULYS. I would say commands—this is some lure.
Swear suddenly 'tis not! [*Harshly and quickly.*

CAL. Is this thy voice?
Put me upon my oath, and I'll swear false.
I tell you out of a sad heart the truth.

ULYS. [*Still hesitating.*] Who bore this message down?

CAL. Hermes.

ULYS. A most
Garrulous god!

CAL. He came from Zeus himself.

ULYS. And Zeus himself I trust not over-far.
Hurler of bolts! I speak it reverently.
[*Seizing her arm.*
I will not loose you, till you swear by Styx,
River of hell, the dreaded oath of gods.

CAL. I swear to you by Styx, river of hell!

ULYS. [*Breaking away.*] O then the ship, the ship!

CAL. [*Detaining him.*] A moment yet!
Kiss me, dear guest! My love for you is deep,
But ah! not deep enough to wish you home.

ULYS. The gods command: we mortals but obey.

CAL. Why will you leave me? I must let you go,
But not without a reason: must I? Speak!
I do but ask the why of what must be.

[*He kisses her absently.*

Is this Ulysses' kiss?

ULYS. Goddess, this news
Makes me forgetful.

CAL. Worse and worse!

ULYS. Again.

[*Kisses her.*

CAL. This out of gratitude? And when you gaze
Into my eyes you see a world beyond.

[*He again moves to go.*

Yet stay! I do not ask for the old look,
Or to lie nearer in the deep of night:
That's ended like a song. But I will know
Why you so burn to sail; why suddenly
I touch these arms of stone, this hand of flint,
Why suddenly your eyes peer seaward, why

All in one moment you are mad for home.
Is it your wife whom you at last remember?
Penelope?—doth she not drag her feet
A little as she walks?—slow—but how chaste!
If I could see her, I would understand.

ULYS. I'd not compare Penelope with thee.

CAL. I have shown you amorous craft, tricks of delay,
Tears that can fire men's blood; you must forget
These, and return to simple husbanding.
Hath she the way of it? all the sweet wiles?
The love that shall not weary, must be art.

ULYS. She hath no skill in loving—but to love.

CAL. And are her eyes dark; dark, yet with lightning?
Never a blue eye held a man like thee.

ULYS. I have forgot the colour of her eyes.

CAL. Patient and fair and comfortable? yes?
Stands she as I do? Is her head so poised?

ULYS. How should a mortal like a goddess stand?

CAL. And can she set a rose in bosom or hair?

ULYS. She hath a wisdom amid garden flowers.

CAL. Doth she sing sweet?

ULYS. The songs of my own land.

CAL. [*Suddenly.*] She hath forgotten thee, so long away.

ULYS. I would remind her with what speed I can.

CAL. Remember, she is mortal: she must die.

ULYS. Therefore I flee the faster to her side.

CAL. O what an end! You two will sit in the sun,
And challenge one another with grey hairs.

ULYS. And so to spare your eyes I would be gone
Ere this my head to such a greyness grow.

CAL. How shall my heart contend against your brain?
Now by that time I thought eternity,
By long sea-evenings when all words would cease,

By all the sad tales of thy wandering,
Sad tales which will be happy to remember,
Tell me the reason of this haste to go.
'Tis she, I know; I want no words to tell me.
But is it she? And now I do recall
Even in your wildest kiss a kiss withheld,
Even in abandonment a something kept;
When veil on veil fell from you, still a veil.
When you so poured your soul out that a woman,
Even a woman, had in her heart said 'now!'
I felt in all that sweet a something stern.

ULYS. Why harp upon my wife? You being woman
Too much exalt the woman: a thousand calls
Are ringing in my ears: my mother pined—

CAL. When did a lover heed a mother's woe?

ULYS. My father desolate or dead: my son—

CAL. No father nor no son could launch that ship.

ULYS. My comrades then!

[ULYSSES' *comrades meanwhile are wandering at back.*

Whatever my inclining,
They still have homes which I must think upon
Who took them far.

CAL. Friend hath killed friend for love.

ULYS. My empty throne and my neglected land:
Duty—

CAL. O! hath it come to duty now?
Duty, that grey ash of a burnt-out fire,
That lie between a woman and a man!
We fence and fence about: tell me the truth.
Why are you mad for home? I'll have the truth,
Once and once only, but the living truth.

ULYS. [*In a wild burst.*] Then have the truth; I speak as a man speaks;
Pour out my heart like treasure at your feet.
This odorous amorous isle of violets,
That leans all leaves into the glassy deep,
With brooding music over noontide moss,

And low dirge of the lily-swinging bee,—
Then stars like opening eyes on closing flowers,—
Palls on my heart. Ah, God! that I might see
Gaunt Ithaca stand up out of the surge,
You lashed and streaming rocks, and sobbing crags,
The screaming gull and the wild-flying cloud:—
To see far off the smoke of my own hearth,
To smell far out the glebe of my own farms,
To spring alive upon her precipices,
And hurl the singing spear into the air;
To scoop the mountain torrent in my hand,
And plunge into the midnight of her pines;
To look into the eyes of her who bore me,
And clasp his knees who 'gat me in his joy,
Prove if my son be like my dream of him.
We two have played and tossed each other words;
Goddess and mortal we have met and kissed.
Now am I mad for silence and for tears,
For the earthly voice that breaks at earthly ills,

The mortal hands that make and smooth the
bed.
I am an-hungered for that human breast,
That bosom a sweet hive of memories—
There, there to lay my head before I die,
There, there to be, there only, there at last!

[CALYPSO *weeps.* ULYSSES *comes and touches her softly.*

Remember, Goddess, the great while it is,
How far, far back, alas how long ago!

CAL. [*Clinging about him.*] Now wilt thou leave me, now, close on the hour
Of silent planets luring us thro' dew,
And steady pouring slumber from the waves,
Wave after wave upon the puzzling brain?

ULYS. My wife, my wife!

CAL. And, mortal, I will breathe
Delicious immortality on thee.
Stay with me, and thou shalt not taste of death.

ULYS. I would not take life but on terms of death,
That sting in the wine of being, salt of its feast.

To me what rapture in the ocean path
Save in the white leap and the dance of doom?
O death, thou hast a beckon to the brave,
Thou last sea of the navigator, last
Plunge of the diver, and last hunter's leap.

CAL. Yet, yet, Ulysses, know that thou art going
Into a peril not of sky nor sea,
But to a danger strange and unimagined.

ULYS. I'd go down into hell, if hell led home!

CAL. [*Resignedly.*] Call up your comrades! Bid them hoist the sails!

ULYS. Comrades! [*He lifts his arms and cries to his followers, who come running to him, leaving the* NYMPHS *on the shore.*]
Great hearts, that with me have so long
Breasted the wave and broken through the snare,
Have we not eaten and drunk on magic shores?
Your hands here!

[*They crowd round him eagerly, some clasping, others kissing his hands.*

COMRADES. O great captain!

ULYS. Have we not
Heard all the Sirens singing and run free?
COM. Lead! lead!
ULYS. Close, close to me! have we not burst
Up from the white whirl of Charybdis' pool?
COM. Storm-weatherer! mighty sailor!
[*They clasp his knees.*
ULYS. What say you?
Shall we put forth again upon the deep?
COM. We will go with thee even into hell!
[*They raise a great shout.*
ULYS. Then Zeus decrees that we again set forth
And break at last the magic of this isle.
COM. Yet whither—whither?
ULYS. Would ye see at last
Gaunt Ithaca?
COM. Ah, God!
ULYS. Would ye behold
The bright fires blaze and crackle on your hearths?
COM. Torment us not!

ULYS. Would you again catch up
Your babes?

COM. Have pity!

ULYS. And clasp again your wives?

COM. Cease! cease!

ULYS. Then homeward will we sail to-night.

COM. [*With amazed cries.*] Home? Home?

[*A wail of* NYMPHS *is heard on sands.*

ULYS. Now lay the rollers under her,
And you make taut the ropes, you, hoist the sail,
And run her down with glee into the deep!

COM. [*Rushing off in various directions.*] The ship! the ship! Ithaca! Praise the gods!

CAL. [*Coming out with cup.*] The cup, Ulysses! Drink to me farewell!

ULYS. [*Taking cup.*] First unto Zeus that would not have us die,
But suffered us to see our homes again.
Farewell, Calypso, the red sun half way
Is sunk and makes a firelight o'er the deep.

CAL. Remember me a little when thou comest
To thine own country. Say farewell to me,
Not to the thought of me!

ULYS. I will not. See!
The ship moves! Hark, their shouts! She moves! she moves.
Hear you the glorying shingle cry beneath her?
She spreads her wings to fly upon the deep!

[*The cries of* ULYSSES' *crew are heard as the ship is shoved down and they climb in.* ULYSSES *springs in and stands in the stern.*

MEN. We float! we float!

ULYS. Now each man to the oar
And, leaning all together, smite the sea!
For it is fated we shall see our homes!

[*The ship puts off, and the wind raised by* CALYPSO *fills the sails.*

CAL. I breathe a breeze to waft thee over sea!
Ah, could I waft thee back again to me!

[*The ship gradually disappears, the joyous chorus of* ULYSSES' *boatmen dying off as the wailing of the* NYMPHS *becomes louder. A cloud gathers over the scene.*

[*The curtain descends, but rising again discovers the ship, now a black speck on red sunset, and* CALYPSO *standing alone looking after it across the sea.*

[*Wailing of* SEA-NYMPHS.

CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

SCENE I

A gloomy barren shore, with black broken cliffs and a few cowering trees: at the back the entrance to a vast cave. Enter ULYSSES *slowly, armed and carrying a hunting spear; he gazes about him.*

ULYS. A dark land and a barren! Hither urged
By strange and cold compulsion of the sea,
What hope for us of shelter or of food?
A grassless, fruitless, unsustaining shore!
I have outpaced my comrades [*Calls*] Phocion!
Elpenor! The gods lied to me who swore
That we should see our homes again. Yet now,
What breathèd sweetness as of blended flowers?
Nearer and nearer still!

Enter ATHENE.

Athene! Thou!
Preceded by the fragrance of thy soul.

ATH. Ulysses, know'st thou to what land thou art come?

ULYS. I know not, but I know the gods did lie
Who swore that I should see at last my home.

ATH. The gods lied not, for thou shalt see thy home.

ULYS. [*Eagerly.*] Ah!

ATH. If thou hast but courage to descend
Thither; to gather tidings of thy land
There, in the dark world, and win back thy way.

ULYS. What world?

ATH. Doth not the region even now
Strike to thy heart? These warning cypress trees,
This conscious umbrage cowering to the ground,
The creeping up of the slow fearful foam;
Rocks rooted in the terror of some cry
That rang in the beginning of the world:
All nature frighted into barrenness.

Lo, mortal, here the very gate of death,
And this no other than the door of hell!

[ULYSSES *falls on his face.*

Swoonest thou down, Ulysses? Wouldst thou see
Thy home?

ULYS. My home, alas!

ATH. Thither! Wouldst thou
Catch to thy breast thy wife?

ULYS. My wife, my wife!

ATH. Thither!

ULYS. [*Rising wildly.*] Who should endure this? Back to the sea!
Back to the wild sea! Farewell, Ithaca!
To the wild winds! Penelope, farewell!

[*Makes to go.*

ATH. Ulysses!

[*He stops.*

Hast thou that in thee which I
Have vaunted of thee 'mid the mighty gods,
And have stood surety for thee in high heaven?

ULYS. Hast thou no pity?

ATH. More than ever a woman;
But as my pity, so my pride in thee.

ULYS. Why unto me, to me alone, is heaven
For ever cruel? Have I not borne enough,
Cyclops and Sirens and Charybdis' whirl,
Ogre and witch and dreadful swoop of winds,
That hell now stands between me and my home?

ATH. The Power that is behind the gods decrees
To make a fiery trial of thy spirit.

ULYS. Is there no other way?

ATH. Thither alone,
Led by cold Hermes, who alone of gods
May pass that portal. Now, Ulysses, learn
What first must be encountered, and o'ercome.
Right in the threshold Hunger stands, and Hate,
And gliding Murder with his lighted face,
And Madness howling, Fear, and neighing Lust,
And Melancholy with her moony smile,
And Beauty with blood dripping from her lips.
Then shalt thou view the inmost house of woe,
And all the faint unhappy host of hell.
If these thou canst endure and pass, thou shalt

Hear tidings of thy home and of thy wife,
Emerge and come at last to thine own land.

ULYS. The gods lay on me more than I can bear.

ATH. Thy native shore!

ULYS. The darkness and the dead!

ATH. Thy warm fire-blaze!

ULYS. The grave and all the grief!

ATH. Voice of thy wife!

[*Faint wailings from the abyss.*

ULYS. That crying from the deep

ATH. Dare, dare it!

ULYS. Is it sworn I shall return
Upward and homeward?

ATH. In thy will it lies.
Thou, thou alone canst issue out of hell.

ULYS. Then? Then?

ATH. Thou shalt return. Zeus give thy voice.

[*Thunder.*

ULYS. I go!

ATH. Now thou art mine!

[*She vanishes.*

COMRADES. [*Heard off.*] Ulysses! Where?

Enter COMRADES.

ELPENOR. We have found thee, captain!

ANOTHER. Does this land give aught
That we can eat?

ANOTHER. Or drink?

ANOTHER. O good roast flesh!

ANOTHER. Even bread were something.

ANOTHER. Great Ulysses, speak!

[ULYSSES *remains with fixed gaze on the entrance of the cave.*

ANOTHER. What hast thou speared for supper, hunter fleet?

[ULYSSES *slowly turns and looks on them.*

ULYS. Listen!

[*A sound of cries, at first faint, rises. They all come round him fearfully. Three times the cries arise, each time louder.*

PHOCION. Who are they that cry up from the earth?

ULYS. The dead!

COM. The dead!

PHOC. And this? What is the place?

ULYS. We now are standing at the door of hell!

[THEY *shudder away from him in silence, all but* PHOCION.

PHOC. Come! come away!

ULYS. No! for I must descend.
Thus only can we reach our homes again.

PHOC. In every peril have I been with thee:
Let me be with thee here!

ULYS. [*Tenderly.*] My Phocion!

ELP. I am an old, old man! am long forgotten
Even by my dearest. Let me go with thee!

ULYS. It may not be: leave me, and say no word!

[*They gradually disappear.*

[ULYSSES *advances and peers into the dark. A long solitary cry causes him to reel back, and he seems to hesitate when again* ATHENE

stands opposite him smiling. After a mute appeal to her for help, she vanishes. He again advances, but recoils as from some terrible sight.

HERM. [*Within.*] Ulysses!

COM. [*From a distance.*] Ulysses!

[ULYSSES *after a moment's pause gradually and fearfully descends.*

SCENE II

The descent into Hades. As the stage is darkened wailings are heard and a sound of moaning wind which ceases as Scene II. discloses a world of darkness with all things impalpable, save for a precipitous descent dimly seen, and at its foot a livid river flowing, a black barge floating on it. There is a continual movement as of wings and flying things. A sudden flash of ULYSSES' *armour discovers him beginning to descend warily with* HERMES *in silence.*

ULYS. Darkness!
HERM. Descend!
ULYS. Thy hand! I fear
to fall.
HERM. Thou, thou alone canst downward
tread.
ULYS. But this!
Is it ocean, land, or air? I grope down,
down!
[*Pauses.*] A whist world! but for whirring as
of wings.
[*He looks down intently.*
Is that a forest yonder, that sways and sighs
With a vast whisper? yet no trees I see.
And there, what seems an ocean: yet no
wave!
The wonder of it takes away the fear.
[*They descend further.* ULYSSES
pauses as a faint cry is heard.
Listen!
[*Again the cry comes nearer. Again,*
and nearer.
What cry, so feeble and so frail?

HERM. It is the cry of children that died young.
The glitter of thy armour lures them toward thee.

[*The* SPIRITS *of* CHILDREN *flit about him with wistful cries.*

ULYS. Little bewildered ghosts in this great night!
They flock about me—

HERM. Wandering on their way
To banks of asphodel and spirit flowers.

ULYS. Ah, a girl's face! A boy there with bright hair!
He is new come and is not listless yet.
And thou dost make a little prattling noise
And hast not learned to speak!

A CHILD. O the bright armour!

ANOTHER. O father, bring us to the place of flowers!

ANOTHER. We have lost our way! Show us the grassy fields!

[ULYSSES *makes appealing gesture to* HERMES, *who stands silent.*

ULYS. I cannot bring you, children, to those flowers.

[*The* CHILDREN *flit away with wistful cries.* ULYSSES *starts forward.*

And 'tis not from the prattle of dead babes
I shall have tidings of my home, my wife.
Down and yet down!

[*Again they descend.*

[SHAPES *of* FURIES *appear circling in the air.*

Hermes, I am pursued,
But O by whom? As sharks to him that drowns,
They make toward me, sidelong swimming shapes!
I'll draw my sword.

[*He draws his sword and thrusts vainly at the* SHAPES.

HERM. What use to strike at phantoms?
The Furies these, who hurrying to the earth
To scourge the wicked, scent thee in mid-flight.

ULYS. [*In terror.*] Over and over me! and round and round!

They'll search the guilt out in my secret soul,
Their eyes go through my body to my heart!
I am but a man! I am all black within!
They leave me, they lift their faces to the wind!
Upward they rush!

HERM. A sudden scent from earth!

[*They again descend.*

ULYS. More and more difficult—yet down and down!
And now I seem to wade, and now to part
Entangled branches, now pass through a cloud.
[*He pauses.*] Hermes, a sighing near my feet, as of reeds.
And now about me phantoms, men and women.

[PHANTOMS *of* SUICIDES *rise about him.*

One hath a scarred throat, and that woman holds
Poison as in a phial—what are ye?

FIRST PHAN. [*To* ULYSSES.] Thou, thou hast life in thee, and flesh and blood.
See, see the man is in the body yet.

ULYS. What are ye?

SECOND PHAN. Spirits of those who cast away
Sweet life and slew ourselves with violent hands.

[*The* PHANTOMS *circle about him.*

FIRST PHAN. In madness I!

SECOND PHAN. And I in jealousy!

PHAN. OF PHÆDRA. Me! Me! Knowest thou not me? Phædra was I,
The queen that burned for cold Hippolytus,
Who scorned me till I knotted here the noose.

ULYS. And art thou Phædra?

PHÆDR. Give me back the sun
And all the scorn again! Only the sun!

FIRST PHAN. Seest thou that glimmer? there still gleams the world!

PHANTOMS. [*Together.*] Back: take us back! How soon these wounds would heal!

ULYS. O ye that being dead, so love the light!
Yet is there not some dear and favourite field,
Some holiest earth where each of ye would be?

PHANTOMS. [*Wheeling round.*] Ah, ah

ULYS. Doth one of you perchance remember
A windy land that stands out of the sea
Gull-haunted, and men call it Ithaca?

[*The* PHANTOMS *float away with sad cries. A pause.*

No! not from babes nor these who slew themselves
Wring I one word of that which I would know.
Ah! bring me to that ghost that shall reveal!

[*Again they descend, but* ULYSSES *pauses.*

HERM. Why tarry we, Ulysses?

ULYS. Hermes, this world
Begins to grip my heart with gradual cold!
O how shall I descend in flesh and blood
Unready and unripe? I have not died:
Therefore I fear! You gods, first let me have
The pang, the last sweat and the rattling throat,
The apparelling and the deep burying,
And die ere I descend amid the dead.

HERM. 'Tis in thy will. Remember Ithaca.

ULYS. [*With effort.*] Down, down! Yet terror hath ta'en hold on me.

[*The burning forms of* LOVERS *suddenly surround him.*

O what are ye? What fire consumes you still?

FIRST PHAN. We are the spirits of lovers who still love.

ULYS. Did not the cold grave all that burning quench?

SECOND PHAN. No! for that fire did eat into our souls.

PHAN. OF EURYDICE. Look upon me! I am Eurydice
That for one moment was so near the day,
When Orpheus backward looked, and all was night.
O lay me on his heart again!

[*The* PHANTOMS *wheel about him.*

PHAN. OF PROTESILAUS. Ah! come, Laodamia!

PHAN. OF PHYLLIS. [*Woman*]. O Demophoön!

ANOTHER. O fire that dies not with our death!

ANOTHER. Alas!

ULYS. Do I not burn for a breast unreachable,
And languish for one voice I may not hear?
For her that weepeth by the rolling sea,
Penelope!

[PHANTOMS *disappear with wailings.*

No answer still, no word!
That oath was hollow as this hollow world
Which said I should hear tidings of my home.
Where is that spirit that shall tell me?

HERM. Lo!
The foot of the descent!

ULYS. Have I then come
Thro' hell at last: now surely—now to hear.

HERM. No, for the river waits thee and the barge.

ULYS. What river?

HERM. See! the creeping Stygian stream,
The mournful barge in which thou must embark
And drift thro' more tremendous torments, ere
Thou shalt have tidings of thy home and wife.

ULYS. [*Wildly.*] Is't not enough to have descended hither
Breathing and in the flesh? Now must I drift

Upon the dreadful river? Spare me, Zeus!
Athene, who didst never leave me yet,
Athene! hearken!—Even she forsakes me.
O Hermes!

HERM. None can aid thee but thy will.

ULYS. [*With a cry.*] On, Hermes, on, even to the river of hell!

[*They approach the river, and* HERMES *enters the barge, but as* ULYSSES *is embarking* CHARON *starts forward oar in hand.*]

CHARON. Stay thou! The flesh still clings about thy limbs,
The blood runs in thy veins! Rash fool, forbear!
Here is no passage save for spirits! Back!
Back to the earth or fear some monstrous doom.

[*He thrusts* ULYSSES *aside.*

HERM. Charon! by heaven's permission comes this man.
Take thou thy oar and urge us down the stream.

[*They begin to drift and now they pass the woe of* TANTALUS *and the fruit.*

Lo! Tantalus in his eternal thirst
Still reaching at the fruit he may not grasp.
See how the wind carries the branches from him.

ULYS. Ah! Tantalus, do I not reach and grasp not?

[*They pass the woe of* TANTALUS *and drift onward, when suddenly on the bank* TEIRESIAS *the Seer starts forward.*

TEIR. Ulysses, art thou come, then? Is no toil
Too hard for thee that thou must drift thro' hell?

ULYS. Teiresias, prophet true! of all men thee,
Thee do I thirst to hear, now shall I know.
Shall I return unto my home at last?

TEIR. Thou shalt return.

ULYS. O Zeus!

TEIR. Yet with sheer loss
Of all thy comrades under tempest crash.

ULYS. Alas!

TEIR. And to a home of strife and storm;

To deadlier peril even than here in hell;
To danger and to darkness shalt return.

ULYS. And she, Penelope—doth she still live?

TEIR. She lives.

ULYS. O thou kind heaven! and holds she true?

TEIR. She lives.

ULYS. O if thou hast a heart, though dead,
Thou wilt not leave me thus.

TEIR. She lives: farewell.

[*The Shade of* TEIRESIAS *disappears; again they drift onward.*

ULYS. 'Lives' and no more is worse to me than 'dead.'
Would that I had known nothing! onward—on!
This fire he hath put in me I must quench!

[*They pass the woe of* SISYPHUS *and the stone.*

HERM. See Sisyphus that in his anguish rolls
Upward, ever, the stone which still rebounds.
Mark how the sweat falls, and what whirl of dust!

ULYS. Ah, brother, such a stone I roll in vain!
There is no torment here that is not mine.

[*They pass the woe of* SISYPHUS, *and again drift on.*

ULYS. Is there not one of all these ghosts that throng
The bank, one only, that can tell me truth.
Hermes! yon spirit lordlier than the rest
With something in his pace familiar:
See how he cometh thro' the other shades
With such imperial stride and sovereign motion.

HERM. [*To* SHADE.] Stay thou!

[*The* SHADE *turns, disclosing the form of* AGAMEMNON.

ULYS. Ah, mighty Agamemnon! king!
O royal 'mid the dead as in the light!
I am Ulysses: often we took counsel
Under the stars, in the white tents, at Troy.
Now speak to me: a living man I come
Amid the dead for tidings of my wife
Penelope. Doth she hold true to me?

AGAM. Ulysses, fear thy wife! Fear to return.

ULYS. What? What? O speak!

AGAM. Thy wife awaits thee now
Coiled like a snake to strike thee with her fangs.

ULYS. Unthinkable!

AGAM. She weaveth death for thee!

ULYS. Horrible!

AGAM. Look on me, me whom my wife
False Clytemnæstra lured unto the bath
And struck me here where now thou see'st the wound.
I that first night did bathe in my own blood,
The first night, the sweet night of my return.

ULYS. [*Bowing his head.*] O Agamemnon!

AGAM. She while I did fight
About Troy city for Ægisthus burned,
She snared, she slew me, then with him she slept.

ULYS. Penelope! I'll kiss thee and fear not.

AGAM. Never so sweet was Clytemnæstra's kiss
As on that night, her voice, never so soft.

[*The* SHADE *of* AGAMEMNON *disappears, and again they drift onward.*

ULYS. Are these the tidings, these for which I dared

This darkness and the very river of hell?
I'll not believe it. O for some fresh voice!
On, on! I cannot hear worse words than these.
[*They pass the woe of* PROMETHEUS *and the vulture*

HERM. Behold Prometheus, who stole fire from heaven.
Now at his heart the eternal vulture eats.

ULYS. Prometheus, on this breast too anguish feeds,
And on this heart swoops down the eating fear
The fear lest I should find her false at last,
False, false after such sea, after such storm
False tho' I stumble toward her out of hell.
You gods, impose some limit! Now to know,
To know if she be true, to know, to know!
[*They pass the woe of* PROMETHEUS, *and again drift onward.*

SHADE OF ANTICLEIA. [*Unseen.*] Ulysses!

ULYS. Ah, who calls me by my name?

ANTI. Ulysses!

ULYS. And the voice, tho' faint it comes,
Is yet the voice of one that was a woman.

ANTI. Ulysses!

ULYS. And it goes through all my blood.
Hermes, there is one near me whom I loved·
A flitting shadow, and it comes and goes,
It stretches out its arms—the face—the face!
'Tis gone! Come nearer or come not at all!
Again! the first face that on earth I saw,
The shining eyes and the remembered smile!
Mother!

[*He leaps on to the bank.*

Here to this breast, here to this heart!

[*He makes to clasp her but the* PHANTOM *eludes him. Again he seeks to embrace her but in vain*

ANTI. Thou canst not touch me, child. I cannot fold thee
For all my yearning. O to have thy head
Again upon this bosom! but alas!
I now am but a shade and a shadow that glides.

ULYS. Mother, thy kiss!

ANTI. These were the lips that kissed thee,
This was the very breast which gave thee milk,
And this the voice that sang thee into sleep.
ULYS. What brought thee to thy death?
ANTI. Waiting for thee,
Waiting and weeping, and long wondering.
ULYS. Alas, alas! and mother, she? she lives—
But stays she true to me?
ANTI. Child, I have come
But lately to this place, and when I died
Still was she true to thee, and knew not time.
ULYS. At last, at last the word that lighteth hell!
One word! and thou alone, mother, couldst speak it!
Thy voice alone: thine out of all the dead!
ANTI. It seems no farther off than yesterday
That she and I were standing hand in hand
Looking for thee across the misted sea.
[ULYSSES *weeps.*
But child, tho' lately I did leave her true,
What hath befallen since? Ulysses, home!

I am aware of tumult in thy halls,
Confusion and a roar of hungry voices,
And peril closing round Penelope:
Fierce peril, child! O hasten!

ULYS. Ah! what peril?

ANTI. I know not: but the time is short: she hath
Swift need of thee: haste, haste! tho' how I yearn
To keep thee for a little comfort! yet
Home, get thee home!

ULYS. Farewell, mother—farewell!

[*The* GHOSTS *begin to surge about him.*

ANTI. Speed, speed!

[ULYSSES *rushes to the foot of the descent, and stumbles upward, a multitude of* SHADOWS *swarming with cries about him.*

ULYS. She lives, and she is true to me.
But she hath need of me! Up to the earth!

[GHOSTS *wheel about him with cries.*

O whirling dead! And a great swirl of souls.
Wife! wife! I come.

[*Cries.*

Ithaca! Ithaca!

[*Fiercer cries.*

I gasp and fight toward thee! Still endure!
Think me not dead! O hear me out of hell!

[*Fiercer and louder cries of the whirling dead.*

Ah! shall I reach that glimmer? Upward, up!
Faint not, Penelope: faint not, endure!

[*He falls and the multitude of* GHOSTS *circle over him with cries, obscuring him. He again starts up.*

The light, the light! the air, the blessed air!

[*Cries.*

I come—I come—I stagger up to thee,
I stumble toward the gleam: Hear, hear me yet,
'Tis not too late—Penelope!—the Sun!

[*He staggers into the glimmer and stands a moment looking back half in dark, half in light, on a forest of straining arms and faces from whence come wailing cries.*

ACT III

ACT III

SCENE I

The seashore of Ithaca veiled in a sea-mist, the pent-house in front of the hut of EUMÆUS *the swineherd dimly visible up stage.* ULYSSES, *aged by suffering and exposure, is lying asleep under a tattered sea-cloak; on one side of him stands* ATHENE, *on the other* POSEIDON.

ATH. [*With outstretched arm.*] Depart,
Poseidon! Thou canst vex no more
Ulysses, who now sleeps on his own shore,
By hunger withered and by tempest wrung,
From toil to toil, from hell to shipwreck flung.
Here let thy buffetings and fury end!

POS. He shall not rest! Even here his
limbs I'll rend:

Back to the foam-path shall the man be hurled,
To plunge and tumble on the watery world!

ATH. Let Zeus then from Olympus give a sign,
And thunder answer to my prayer or thine.

POS. [*Raising his hands.*] Father of gods! to me be vengeance given,
That none henceforward mock the might of heaven.

ATH. Father, permit the man peace in his home,
And lift at last the wandering curse of foam.

[ZEUS *thunders*, ATHENE *makes gesture to* POSEIDON.

POS. Highest, I hear thy thunder and obey!
[*Going.*
Woe to all ships I meet upon my way.
[*Exit* POSEIDON.

ATH. [*Bending over* ULYSSES.] At last I ease thy bosom of its sighs;
And close the tribulation of those eyes.
Soft as a sister over thee I bend,
Mortal, and move as an immortal friend.

There is no earthly burning in this breast,
No fever, but this love is rich in rest;
The wistfulness of women I may feel,
And mine the faithful smile, the hands that heal;
But what in them is passion falls from me
Only as dew doth in benignity.
Yet once more will I try thee, to make clear
If yet thy wit is nimble; and appear
As a young goatherd from the pasture near.

[*Turning before she goes.*

Hath the wave rusted thee, or damped thy skill?
Of all thy tasks the fiercest waits thee still,
Ere I restore thee, at the destined time,
To armèd splendour of thy manhood's prime.

[*Exit* ATHENE.

ULYS. [*Dreaming of past labours.*] Ah, loose me to that music! Cut these cords!
Hark! breakers thro' the gloom! Reef, reef the sail!

[*He wakes and gazes about him.*

Some god hath cast me forth upon this land;

And O! what land? So thick is the sea-mist,
All is phantasmal. What king ruleth here
What folk inhabit?—cruel unto strangers,
Or hospitable? The gods have lied to me
When they foretold I should see Ithaca.
This is some swimming and Cimmerian isle,
With melancholy people of the mist.
Ah! Ithaca, I shall not see thee more!

[*He sits down in dejection*

Enter ATHENE *disguised as a young goatherd with a cloak and a staff.*

ULYS. Sir, I pray you tell me what land is this?

ATH. First tell me, sir, of yourself, and from what country you are come.

ULYS. [*With rapid affable mendacity.*] My name is Neleus and in Crete was I born, my father Melampus, and my mother Arcite. But I, sir, have a man's blood on my hands and therefore am fugitive, and seek refuge here if any may be found.

ATH. [*Aside in delight.*] He hath his tale on the instant!

ULYS. But now tell me what is this shore on which I am cast up?

ATH. Hast heard men speak of Ithaca?

ULYS. [*Repressing sudden joy.*] Ithaca! Somewhere have I heard the name, but where? And is this Ithaca?

ATH. Even so.

ULYS. Is it an island or part of the mainland?

ATH. An island surely And hast thou heard never of our king? He is far-famed.

ULYS. How is he called?

ATH. Ulysses.

ULYS Ulysses! Did he not sail with other chiefs against Troy city?

ATH. Even so. But now we know not if he be alive or dead.

ULYS. I fear that he is dead

ATH. Hast any certain news?

ULYS. None certain, but I much fear that he is drowned in the salt sea.

ATH. [*Delightedly.*] Yet might his wife entertain thee kindly.

ULYS. His wife—[*checking himself*]. Ah! had he a wife?

ATH. Surely—her name Penelope.

ULYS. Penelope! and it seems to me that her name too I have heard.

ATH. O! well said, Ulysses. Thou art never wanting.

ULYS. [*Starting.*] Stranger!

ATH. I am Athene, and have taken this shape but to try thy wit.

ULYS. Goddess, how shall men know thee? And yet while thou wast speaking I was aware of a tone more sweet than mortal; but would not betray thee.

ATH. O excellent Ulysses, who standest there and fearest that thou art dead! I have more joy in thee than before, for thy craft is in no way abated.

ULYS. But ah! I am fooled again! Goddess! Is this Ithaca indeed—this very earth?

ATH. Behold!

[*The sea-mist slowly unrolls, discovering the land.*

ULYS. Slowly the mist fades! Ah! the cypress tree
I was so proud to plant as a boy! and there
The cave forbidden which I therefore loved!
Brighter, more bright! The crest of Neriton!
The rustling glade there where I killed the boar.
Now all the land gleams: look you there! the ridge
Where the young laughing babe Telemachus
First clapped his hands at sight of the sea: and O!
Yon holy winding path where last I kissed
Penelope, who toward me swayed and spoke not.
I came there down the slope most lingeringly,
And turned by the myrtle tree, and turned and turned.
Goddess, I cannot see for the great tears.
There! there! the very peak to which she climbed
Waving a sea-farewell with helpless hands!
O verdure to the sea-man that's come home!

O light upon the land where I was born!
O dear, dear Earth, thou warm mother of me,
Art glad, art glad in thy brown bosom; here
I kiss and kiss thee: here I fling me down
And roll and clasp and cover me with thee!
[*Starting up*
Ah! 'tis a dream: O God, it is a lure!
Incredible that ever I can rest!
I am fooled by the old sea-magic; my home trembles·
An apparition of the glassy deep,
A fading island that we come to never!
Is it rooted, rooted fast and cannot fly?
I shall go mad if I am fooled! Speak! speak!
Is this the earth, the earth where I was born?
ATH. Ulysses, 'tis at last, 'tis Ithaca!
ULYS. Ah! [*Sobs, overcome by emotion, then slowly*] I have been but a little while away then,
And suffered the great sea as in a dream.
But she, Penelope? She lives, I know,
And she holds true: but peril closes round her—
What peril?

ATH. Up, Ulysses, from the ground!
Art broken down? Fury, not tears, I ask!
Up, up! thy wife by suitors is beset
Who waste and strip and drink away thy home:
She is hard driven and on the point to yield.

ULYS. Dogs! Dogs!

ATH. Wilt thou not rush upon them straight
And slay them? smite, and on the instant?

ULYS. No:
I'll crouch before I spring, spy ere I leap.

ATH. O wise, still wise! Now have I tried thee sure,
Rage doth not make thee rash! No more I doubt.
Now bow thy back! and cast on thee that cloak.
Thou art so marred with the sea misery
That none will know thee. lean thee on this staff,
And as a beggar knock at thy own door,
And weave in thy own halls these wooers' doom.
[*Going.*

ULYS. Now dost thou leave me, in so fierce a pass?

ATH. I'd see thee stand alone; 'tis sweet to those
In heaven at seasons to withold their aid.
But I am ever with thee, unto the end.
Strike not, Ulysses, till I send the sign.

ULYS. What sign?

ATH. A lightning flash: till they forbear.

ULYS. [*Assuming his disguise and recognising the hut of* EUMAEUS.] Ah! the old swine-hut: lives Eumaeus yet?

[*Exit* ATHENE.

[*He walks slowly towards the hut.* EUMAEUS *is heard within* '*G-r-r Antinous, in Eurylochus, g-r-r Ctesippus.*' EUMAEUS *comes out to the pent-house in front of the hut, carrying a pointed stick.*

EUM. Away, old beggar! Here are no leavings for you!

ULYS. Sir, but a handful of husks that the swine have left.

EUM. Out! These are Ulysses' swine: they leave nothing.

ULYS. Sir, I fall with hunger.

EUM. And so perhaps even now does my master.

ULYS. I have tidings of your lord Ulysses.

EUM. That's an old tale with you beggars—you have all seen Ulysses, and then you are well fed by his queen Penelope. [*He begins making a mash for the swine.*] One saw him in Troyland, another in Crete, another saved him from drowning, another saw him drown but could not save him. One hath a lock of his hair, another the string of his sandal. Dost carry anything of his about thee?

ULYS. I do.

EUM. And what?

ULYS. His hunger.

EUM. Away, you saucy beggar, or I'll loose his dogs on you: yet no. His wife will be wroth if any are turned away who can tell of Ulysses. Is thy lie ready, is it a good lie?

ULYS. Sir, I beseech you, food!

EUM. Come in, then, and earn thy supper. I am not fooled like a woman: fill that jar with water, and pick up these fallen acorns. [ULYSSES *obeys*.] Where hast thou seen him then? There is but one place where he has not been seen—

ULYS. What place is that?

EUM. In hell: I recommend hell to thee: no beggar hath yet bethought him of hell.

ULYS. But this would not please his wife?

EUM. No, but 'twould set her mind at rest concerning him. Here's a piece of fat chine for thee.

ULYS. Humbly I thank you.

EUM. His swine are well kept still—

ULYS. And for that I thank you.

EUM. [*Prodding swine outside.*] G-r-r-r Antinous, Ctesippus; in Eurymachus.

ULYS. Are swine so called.

EUM. I name these three after the chief suitors, and when rage swells to bursting, I strike them so: a poor vengeance, but ready

at all hours. Ulysses! Ah! year after year have I been faithful to thee, master, and of each of thy swine can I give account!

ULYS. But he being far off, thou hast no need to be over-careful.

EUM. I have the greater care because of the smaller need.

ULYS. But if he be dead!

EUM. I'll not believe that till I hear it from his own lips.

ULYS. But this Ulysses—so I have heard—was but a careless ruler, and little beloved.

EUM. Old man, hast a mind to finish thy supper?

ULYS. I have indeed. for my hunger is no whit abated.

EUM. Then let no ill word escape thee of Ulysses, or thou wilt go hungry away!

ULYS. And his queen, Penelope?

EUM. She, poor lady, is so driven by the rascal wooers that this very night is she to choose one of them for husband

ULYS. This night?

EUM. Yea, indeed, for this night the moon is at the full.

ULYS. Take me to her, even now: my hunger is gone from me.

EUM. Come, then, for the sky pales toward twilight! [*A sound of running is heard.*]

Hark!

ULYS. A sound of running, and the feet run across my heart. [*Aside.*]

EUM. Back! 'tis Telemachus, Ulysses' son, rushing hither; and see, men pursuing him to take his life. Ah! that spear grazed his neck. Master, master!

Enter TELEMACHUS *breathless, faint with running.*

TELEM. Eumæus, let me die here in this faithful spot! I am pursued by men set on by the wooers; I cannot turn; from each bush they start. I'll die here with my face to them: but you—ah, old man!

EUM. An old beggar with the old tale of your father.

[*The pursuers appear: two or three*

hang back, and two follow to the door of the hut.

TELEM. Fly, old man.

EUM. They are upon us.

TELEM. Father, let me die as thy son should.

ULYS. [*A beating at the door.*] Stand back! Within, both of you! I will speak with them.

TELEM. Wilt die then?

ULYS. I do not intend so. In! I'll have my way.

[ULYSSES *from entrance of hut approaches the foremost of the two pursuers.*

ULYS. Sir, sir, I die of hunger—I pray you.

FIRST MAN. Out of my way, old dog! Pylas, in!

ULYS. Thus do I clasp your knees, and entreat.

FIRST MAN. Loose me, rags!

[ULYSSES *tightens his grip.*

ULYS. I will not loose you till you give me food.

FIRST MAN. Help, Pylas, help! his arm holds like iron! Help, help, he pulls me down like a hound at my throat.

[ULYSSES *hurls him down and springs at his throat.*

TELEM. Take not his life: he is a hired thing. Who set you on to murder me?

PYLAS. [ULYSSES *suffering him to rise.*] Eurymachus.

TELEM. Ah, he whose arm is ever around my neck.

[ULYSSES *releases* PYLAS, *who limps away.*

SECOND MAN. I'll fly a land that breeds such beggars as this.

TELEM. Thou hast saved me—me, who am
not of thy blood.
Thou hast o'ertasked thy strength and
tremblest: lean
On me: give me thy hand.

ULYS. [*Aside.*] I fear to touch it.

TELEM. Still thou art trembling. Come!

[*Again holds out his hand.*

ULYS. Suffer me, sir,
To kiss this hand.

[*He kisses* TELEMACHUS' *hand and bows over it.*

TELEM. Sorrow not thus, old man! Lift up thine eyes.

ULYS. I cannot yet: thine arm!

[TELEMACHUS *leads him a step or so.*

There hath been a time
When I had led thee thus, ay, step by step.

TELEM. Thou hast not looked into my face once.

[ULYSSES *looks slowly up into his face, laying both hands on his shoulders: he looks long on him, then bows his head.*

ULYS. Ah!
Thou art the son of Ulysses, art thou not?

TELEM. Ay, of Ulysses, him that comes not back.

ULYS. I saw thy father on a lone sea-isle
Once, and he spoke thy name.

TELEM. O what said he?

ULYS. Only thy name. He looked o'er the wide sea,
And softly said, 'Little Telemachus.'

TELEM. [*Dashing tears from his eyes.*] Thou hast seen him! art the nearest thing to him.

ULYS. And I had a sacred word from him to thy mother.

TELEM. Come tell it to her now, ere 'tis too late;
Suitors like wolves about her howl; and she
Must choose this very night of the full moon.

ULYS. Haste, haste!

EUM. [*Coming out.*] Old man, a cup of wine for thee,
Thou'lt have no further need of any lie.
Thou hast saved her son, and thou art sure of supper.

ULYS. [*Drinking.*] Is this Ulysses' wine?

[EUMÆUS *nods.*

'Tis a good wine.

[*He sets cup down suddenly, pointing to the sky, in which the full moon has become faintly visible.*

The moon, the moon: come.

[*He starts to go.*

EUM. How didst thou guess
That way leads to the palace?

ULYS. I came here
Once as a boy, long since: my father brought me.

[EUMÆUS *retires again within the hut.*

Young sir, a moment: and this way—apart.
We two are going into mighty peril,
And the end who knows? now lest we meet no more,
Wilt thou not kiss this grey head once? may'st thou
Never such sorrow know as I have known!

[TELEMACHUS *bends over* ULYSSES' *head and kisses it.* ULYSSES *is shaken.*

From here thy palace roofs can we descry:
See'st thou that upper chamber looking south?
There wast thou born upon a summer night.

TELEM. But thou then?

ULYS. I stood by the door in fear.

[*He throws back the tattered cloak and raises himself to his height.*

Child, I begot thee.

TELEM. Father, art come home?

[*He falls in* ULYSSES' *arms.*

ULYS. Askest thou proof?

TELEM. I feel that thou art he:
I know it in every vein and drop of blood.
Thou art ragged?

ULYS. But to weave these wooers' doom.

TELEM. Eumæus, hither! my father is come home.

EUM. [*Appearing at door.*] Hast thou no likelier tale for me than that?
Call me not from the pig-mash.

TELEM. Hither and see.

[EUMÆUS *comes down.*

Dost thou not know him?

EUM. [*Gazing at him.*] Sir, I know you not.

ULYS. You that are human, know me not: and yet
If Argus my old hound should see me now,
Though he were dying he would wag his tail.

EUM. [*Confusedly.*] Argus, old Argus!

ULYS. And for further proof,
The scar made by the boar in yonder glade!

[*He bares his knee.*

EUM. [*Embracing his knees.*] O master, O my man of men— at last!

ULYS. Rise, 'tis no time for tears. Ye'll go with me?

EUM. To death.

ULYS. Yet I mistrust ye.

TELEM. Father!

ULYS. Not
Your love: I doubt your wisdom and your craft.
When ye shall see me buffeted, reviled,
Ye will forget I am a beggar man.

EUM. We will revile thee more and taunt thee worse.

ULYS. Can ye be very patient? for I know not
As yet what I shall do. I wait the sign
From her, that goddess who hath brought me hither.

TELEM. We will be very patient till the end.

ULYS. Come then: but I will enter last, alone.
Remove you every weapon from the hall,
But leave three spears, three shields, upon the walls
That we may snatch them when our need is come.
Now haste [*They start to go.*
Yet stay: if any ask of you
Why ye have thus removed the spears and shields
Have ye bethought you of your answer?

TELEM. No.

ULYS. Then say ye have removed them lest the smoke
Should tarnish them!

EUM. Master, I know thee now.
Thy old craft!

[*The full moon at this point shines forth brightly.*

ULYS. Lo, the moon already bright!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II

Interior of the banqueting-hall in ULYSSES' *palace. The walls richly decorated and encrusted with coloured patterns, bosses and friezes of animals, etc. Two columns plated with bronze sustain the roof, the central part of which is raised so as to admit the light. On a wall hang the three spears and three shields as ordered by* ULYSSES, *and in another place his bow in a richly-decorated case. The hall is lighted by lamps held by* ATTENDANTS. *The main entrance from without is through a doorway with a raised threshold in the centre of the stage at the back: this door stands open to the vestibule and the moonlight: a staircase on the left leads up to another door opening into the women's apartments. A dais extends along the back of the hall: on this and on the floor to right and left are disposed the tables and couches where the* SUITORS *are*

discovered revelling, with the faithless HANDMAIDENS *interspersed among them and drinking from their cups, and* ATTENDANTS *standing by and serving.* TELEMACHUS *sits at the head of one of the tables. In the centre of the hall is an open space, with a fire burning on the hearth in the midst, and beside it the chairs of* PENELOPE *and the Minstrel, the former unoccupied.* PHEMIUS *the Minstrel is seated in his chair by the hearth, singing—*

Great is he who fused the might
  Of the earth and sun and rain
Into draughts of purple light,
  Draughts that fire the heart and brain:
Let us praise him when the goblets flash in light
And the rapture of the revel fills the brain.

What were revel without wine?
  What were wine without a song?
Let us hymn the gift divine
  With a music wild and strong,

With a shouting for the god who gave the wine,
And a guerdon to the minstrel for his song.

Blest is he who strikes the lyre
At the feast where princes quaff:
Higher mounts the mirth and higher,
Loud and louder peals the laugh—

[PHEMIUS *breaks off suddenly, gazing on the* SUITORS *in horror while a dim mist comes down on the hall and the moonlight is obscured.*

ANTIN. What ails thee, man?
EURYM. Why dost thou stare on us?
PHEM. O wretched men! What doom is coming on ye?
What mist is this that overspreads the world?
Shrouded are all your faces in black night!

[*They laugh together softly and sweetly.*

See how the feast is dabbled o'er with blood,
And all your eyes rain tears, and though ye laugh
Sweetly on me, ye laugh with alien lips!

[*Again they laugh sweetly upon him.*

And a voice of wailing arises and all the walls
Drip fast with blood, yea, and with blood the roof!

[*They laugh again.*

And the porch is full and full is the court of ghosts
And spirits hurrying hell-ward in the gloom,
Yea, and the light hath perished out of heaven!
Laugh not so idly on me with your lips,
But arise and flee! your doom is at the doors.

[PHEMIUS *hurries out of the hall. The mist clears and* ULYSSES *is seen standing on the threshold in the central doorway unobserved by any.*

ANTIN. Madness is come upon him!

EURYM. O, a poet!

CTES. He hath taken from me all desire for food.
And there! is that blood there? Eurymachus!
Am I not rosy and round as ever I was?

EURYM. You are, Ctesippus.

CTES. And I see no ghosts.

ANTIN. He hath drunk o'ermuch: hence all this mist and blood.

EUM. [*To* TELEMACHUS.] O master, see you that old beggar man?
Say, shall I put him from the door? Out, out!
[*With exaggerated roughness.*

ULYS. [*Coming down into the hall.*] I crave a word, sir, with Ulysses' son.
Which is he?

EUM. There!

ULYS. [*Approaching* TELEMACHUS *humbly*].
Suffer me, sir, a word!
I bring you tidings of your father.

TELEM. [*With simulated harshness.*] O!
The old tale!

ULYS. [*Cringeingly.*] Sir!

TELEM. Out with thee!

EUM. Out!

TELEM. Or stay!
Thou shalt have leave to limp from guest to guest
And eat what thou canst beg. As for your tale,
My father is long dead.

ULYS. Then first from you
I beg a crust of bread, or sip of wine.

TELEM. Here's for thee. [*Tosses him bread.*

ULYS. Humbly, sir, I thank you.

[*He passes from guest to guest.*

A SUITOR. Here.

[*Pushes wine-cup to him.*

CTES. My appetite is fled: take what you will.

EURYM. Here is a gristly morsel for old gums.

MEL. [*To* ANTINOUS, *as* ULYSSES *approaches.*] Antinous, keep the old man far from me!
He'll soil this robe; and hath a smell of swine.

ULYS. I would not soil you, lady; but you, sir—

ANTIN. You louting beggar, I have nought for you!
From me! [*He strikes him on the mouth.*

EURYM. He stood thy buffet like a rock!

ULYS. O my deep soul, endure!

TELEM. [*Starting up.*] Antinous,
I'll have no beggar struck within my halls!

ANTIN. Oho! And did I strike one of thy blood
Or of thy guests? Thou filthy beggar, off!
[*Strikes him again.*

ULYS. Athene, patience!

EUM. All my blood boils up.
[*Throws log savagely on fire.*

ULYS. [*Coming near to* ANTINOUS.] O noble sir, of all who feast around,
Tall men and fair, thou art the fairest far,
And splendid in thy youth and in thy strength.
But I am old and many have I seen
So fair, so strong, fallen into misery,
Princes whom in their pride the gods laid low.
Remember in thy strength the evil days.

ANTIN. [*Starting up.*] This dismal beggar I'll endure no more,
Who gibbers at the feast of evil days.
Away with him or I will hurl him forth.

CTES. A sad feast this—the minstrel first sees blood:
And now this beggar croaks to us of age.

CLYT. Since he came in we are all grown miserable.

MEL. Sirs, drive him forth, that we may laugh again.

SUITORS. [*Rising from the tables.*] Out with the old crow! cast him out: away!

[*They come round* ULYSSES *and hustle him to the door.*

TELEM. I say the old man shall not be thrust forth.

[*Aside to* ULYSSES.] Is it now, father, is it now?

EUM. When, when?

SUITORS. [*Hustling* ULYSSES.] Out with him!

HANDMAIDS. Spit on him!

SUITORS. Unloose the dogs!

CTES. [*Interposing.*] A word, a word! thy mother still delays:
Let us beguile the time; leave him to me,
And we'll wring laughter from this kill-joy yet.

[*To* ULYSSES *with mock deference.*]

Give me your hand, old man!

[*To* SUITORS.] These beggars all

Were princes once. Now hearken! Sir, I see
Behind these rags and filth what man thou art.
Tell us—and now I look on thee I mark
A something noble in thy air—thou hadst
A palace once, and riches, hadst thou not?

ULYS. A palace and great riches had I once.

[*General laughter.*

CTES. [*To* SUITORS.] What said I? Yet in rags the great are known.
Wast thou not in old days thyself a king?

ULYS. In the old days I was myself a king.

[*All laugh heartily.*

CTES. [*To* SUITORS.] Hush!
[*To* ULYSSES.] Look around; even such a hall hadst thou.

ULYS. [*Gazing slowly around.*] Once did I feast in some such hall as this.

CTES. Not by thine own fault (ah! I know it well)
But by some anger of the gods thou art fallen.

ULYS. The gods, the gods have brought me to this pass.

ANTIN. Impudent liar!

CTES. And thou didst leave behind
A wife most beautiful, a queen of women!

TELEM. How long will he endure?

EUM. O for a blow!

MEL. He is grown cautious, he'll not speak to that.

CLYT. His wife! Some addled hag that tendeth swine!

MEL. Was woman found to mate her with such mud?

TELEM. His spirit is dead in him.

EUM. Thou art broken at last!

CLYT. He speaks not! See, the old fool's eyes are dim.

MEL. [*With mock caress.*] O shall I kiss thy tears away, my love?

CHLOR. Thy wife is old: wilt thou have me, fair youth?

CLYT. O wouldst thou take me, bridegroom, to thy halls!

EURYM. Cease, cease! Ye all mistake. He hath come here
A suitor for Penelope.

ANTIN. [*Throwing cup at him.*] Then take
This gift to aid thy suit.

A SUITOR. [*Throwing a bowl.*] And this.

CTES. [*Throwing a scrap from the feast.*] And this.

OTHERS. [*Casting things upon him.*] And here: and here.

CTES. Now up and urge thy suit!

TELEM. [*To* EUMÆUS.] Why wait a word that never comes? The swords!

EUM. Stay, stay: he looks on us, and his eye burns.

Enter PENELOPE *down staircase from the upper chambers; she walks slowly and sadly to her chair beside the hearth in the centre of the room.*

SUITORS. [*Making way for her and then gathering to right and left of her in the central space.*] The Queen, the Queen!

ANTIN. Now be the bridegroom chosen!

EURYM. Lady, this is the night when thou shalt choose.

Grave is thy mien: here's that shall make thee smile.
Bring forth this wooer lordliest and last.

CTES. These rags are but a guise: a noble man!

PEN. [*To* TELEMACHUS.] Child, knowest thou this old man whom they mock?

TELEM. Mother, it is an old poor beggar man
Who says that he brings tidings of my father.
Wilt thou not hear him, mother, ere thou choose?

EURYM. Art thou still eager, lady, for new lies?

ANTIN. Art thou not weary of these beggars' tales?

PEN. I have been too oft deceived: now my still heart
I bare no more to every beggar's eye:
Sacred shall be this hunger of my soul
And silent till the end—

[*To* TELEMACHUS, *who makes signs to her.*]

What wouldst thou say?

TELEM. [*Taking her apart.*] Mother, a word; but a word.

ANTIN. [*Interposing.*] Stand back, young sir!
There shall be no more plots between you two.

[*Murmurs of assent.*

Nor beggars weave another web—of lies.
The moon is full! Now shalt thou choose at once.

TELEM. Mother!

ANTIN. An end of tricks!

SOME SUITORS. Thy word, thy word!

OTHERS. Now answer!

OTHERS. Now no more delay!

ALL. Choose, choose!

[*They all crowd about* PENELOPE *to hear her decision,* ULYSSES *in the meantime crouching in the ashes by the hearth.*

ULYS. Goddess, hast thou forsaken me at last?—

TELEM. [*To* ULYSSES.] A moment, and too late!

ULYS. I wait the sign!

PEN. Speak any then who will: I'll answer him.

CTES. I claim to speak the first.

EURYM. By right of age.

CTES. Lady, I cannot speak as a raw boy,
But as a man of comfortable years;
Though in my youth more terrible was none
To foemen; and I like not to remember
The blood that I have spilt. Behold me now
A man not old, but mellow, like good wine,
Not over-jealous, yet an eager husband.
This figure something of Apollo lacks,
But though I might not catch the eye of a girl,
Still a wise woman would consider well,
Ponder by nights ere she would let me go.
Yet I would urge less what Ctesippus is
Than what Ctesippus has the power to give.
[*To* ATTENDANTS.] Now hold up to the moon that glimmering robe;
Turn it this way and that; this coffer now,
With armlets of wrought gold, brooches of price,

And golden bowls embossed with beasts and
men;
These draught-boards, ivory inlaid with silver,
That glistering tire and these enamelled chains.
Lo, whatsoever woman can desire
I'll give thee without pause and without stint,
Wilt thou but suffer me to lead thee home.

PEN. Ctesippus, not the glory of gems or gold
Can move me: hath the sea a pearl so rich
As dead Ulysses which it treasureth
Far down, far from these eyes? Rather would I
Possess some rag of him drawn up perchance
By nets of seamen hauling 'neath the moon
Than all these jewels glistering at my feet.
How couldst thou think to please me with these
toys,
When in that chamber I have garnered up
Garments more rich to me, faded and dim,
Old robes and tarnished armour lovelier far?
Those hadst thou seen, thou couldst not offer
these.

EUM. [*To* CTESIPPUS.] Now thou hast leave
to go—

[*Murmurs.*

Your pardon, princes.

EURYM. Lady, I bring no gauds of pearl and gold,
I know thou art not this way to be lured.
I share thy grief for him who now is dead:
Noble was he, a wise man and a strong.
O were he here, I first would clasp his hand.
A moment till my voice return to me.

[*He bows his head on his hands.*

But she who sits enthroned may not prolong
The luxury of tears; nor may she waste
In lasting widowhood a people's hopes,
So hard is height, so cruel is a crown.
Thou art a queen: a moment then for grief;
Then for the people what remains of life.
I offer thee the comfort of high cares,
And consolation from imperial tasks:
To share with me the governance of a land
And bring thy woman's insight to the state;
The touch that's gracious, deft, and feminine.
Sea-gazing consort of a hero dead,
Reign thou with me, and find in rule relief.

That thou no longer art a girl, and green,
Troubles me not; rather I prize thee more
For that long suffering and sleeplessness
And the sweet wisdom of thy widowhood.
Thou hast caught splendour from the sailless sea,
And mystery from many stars outwatched;
Rarer art thou from yearning and more rich.
Humbly I would entreat you for my answer.

PEN. Sir, could I list to any, 'twere to thee:
Fair were thy words, and such as women love,
And thou hast found my brain, but not my heart,
Feigning a ruth I felt thou didst not feel.
Ask me not to forget in public good
This solitary, dear, and piercing loss.
Rather would I remember one dead man,
Wasting the years away, and yet remember,
Than rule a living kingdom by thy side.
Alas! I am a woman utterly!

ANTIN. Enough of jewels, and enough of thrones!
Would these men lure thee? I by thee am lured.
For thee, O woman, thee alone, I thirst.

Time, that doth mar us all, and dims, and damps,
Ashens the hair and scribbles round the eye,
Weareth not thee, thou miracle, away,
Ever in beauty waxing without wane.
No more I'll toss upon a burning bed,
Leap out at midnight on a smouldering floor,
Pacing, pacing away the aching night.
Thou, thou didst light this fire, and thou shalt quench it.

TELEM. [*Aside to* ULYSSES.] Dost thou hear, father?

ULYS. Goddess, now the sign!

ANTIN. Or, if thou will not, I'll compel thee.

[*Murmurs.*

O!

I care not for your murmurs: I risk all!
Come now away! or on the instant I
Will catch thee in these arms up from the ground
And fling thee o'er my shoulder, and run with thee
As from a house aflame.

TELEM. I'll spill thy blood.

ULYS. Unleash me, goddess, let me go.

EUM. Up, up!

ANTIN. For what dost thou still wait? For whom, for whom?
Thy husband? he is dead, drowned in the ooze:
The fish are at him now in the deep slime.

PEN. O!

TELEM. [*To* ULYSSES.] Art thou tame?

ULYS. I bite these bloody lips.

ANTIN. Or if he be not dead, what is he now?
A shambling shadow, a wrecked, mumbling ghost,
A man no more: no better than yon beggar
That huddles to the fire: so bowed, so worn,
So ragged and ruined, and so filthy and fallen!
Look on that beggar! There thy husband see!

PEN. Splendid Antinous, I tell thee this;
That if my husband on this moment came
In by that door even as yon beggar man,
So bowed, so worn, so ragged and so fallen,

Him would I rather catch unto this heart,
And hold his holy ruins in my arms,
Than touch thee in thy glory and thy strength.

ULYS. [*Starting up.*] O nobly spoken!

[*Uproar.*

Suffer an old man

ANTIN. Now answer.

EURYM. Lady!

CTES. Bring those robes again!

PEN. [*Bewildered.*] Sirs, but one moment, will you give me leave?
Then do I swear by all the gods to choose.
A womanish last request—a silly favour!

ANTIN. O!

EURYM. [*Fawning on her.*] Lady, I will not refuse thee.

PEN. 'Tis
That I may satisfy me if this beggar
Perhaps doth bring me tidings of Ulysses.

ANTIN. This but to put us by!

EURYM. Suffer her, sirs!

[*The* SUITORS *retire sullenly up.*

PENELOPE *comes back to her seat at the fire beside which* ULYSSES *crouches. As she approaches him he trembles.*

PEN. Old man, wilt thou deceive me yet again?
Be not afraid: there's nought in me to fear.

ULYS. I'll not deceive thee, lady: nearer draw
And motion all away!

[PENELOPE *signs to all to move away.*

Canst thou endure
The shaft of sudden joy, yet make no cry?

PEN. Though I shall fall I'll not cry out: say, say.

ULYS. Ulysses lives—thou art gone white—be still!
Grip fast thy chair and look upon the ground?—
And he is very near to thee even now.

PEN. Where, where?

ULYS. This night is he in Ithaca;
Perchance even now is rushing to his halls;
Might at this moment come in by that door.

PEN. How shall I trust thy tale? If thou sayest true
Thou ne'er shalt beg again.

ULYS. I come from him.

PEN. What is thy name?

ULYS. Idomeneus from Crete.
He charged me with these tidings—and this ring.

PEN. This would he not have given: O this was pulled
From his dead finger!

ULYS. Lady, if I lie,—
If on this night Ulysses comes not home,—
Then give me to thy thralls to slay me here.

PEN. Ah! they will kill him.

ULYS. Fear not; he is wise.
Only do thou each moment still delay
Thy answer.

PEN. Yet what plea?

ULYS. Propose to them
Some simple trial whereby thou mayst choose.

PEN. What, what?

ULYS. The bow: is that Ulysses' bow?

PEN. Cherished and daily suppled by these hands.

ULYS. Say thou wilt choose whoe'er shall bend his bow.
But still to interpose some brief delay,
Call you some woman forth to bathe my feet.

PEN. Melantho, bring clear water hither and bathe
This old man's feet.

MEL. I? I'll not touch his feet,
For I can touch the lips of better men.

ULYS. Lady, some woman that hath seen much sorrow
As I have.

PEN. Eurycleia, bathe his feet.

[EURYCLEIA *brings water in a brazen vessel to* ULYSSES; *as he lifts his robe she sees the scar and drops the basin.*

EUR. The scar there.

ULYS. Wouldst thou slay me?
hold thy peace.

PEN. What ails thee, Euryclcia?

EUR. O my mistress!
These old hands tremble even at such a task.

ANTIN. [*Advancing.*] Now, lady, now! This is delay enough!
Hast thou at last heard tidings of thy lord?
Doth he come home to-night?

PEN. Alas, alas!
He is drowned, and from his finger, lo! this ring.

ANTIN. Thou'rt satisfied at last?

SUITORS Now answer: choose.

PEN. No one of you I like above the rest,
Yet have I sworn to choose: so I will put
This matter to a simple trial.

SUITORS What?

PEN. See where behind you hangs Ulysses' bow.
He that can bend his bow and loose a shaft,
Him will I take as husband from you all.

[*They rush to take it.*

SUITORS. The bow!

PEN. [*Staying them.*] My son alone shall reach it down
After such time shall be the first to touch it.

[PENELOPE *retires down to watch the trial.* TELEMACHUS *brings down the bow and a sheaf of arrows.* CTESIPPUS *advances, and after much groaning and panting fails to string it.*

CTES. Easily in the morning could I bend it,
But I have supped!

[EURYMACHUS *essays to string it and fails.*

EURYM. Lady, wilt choose a husband
For brutish force? what play hath the mind here?

[ANTINOUS *fails to string the bow.*

ANTIN. If I can bend it not, no man can bend it.

PEN. [*To* OTHERS.] And will you not essay? or you?

OTHERS. Not we.

ANOTHER. Where craft and strength have failed what use for us?

PEN. I will wed no man till he bend that bow.

[*Angry murmurs among the* SUITORS. *Lightning flashes;* ULYSSES *recognises by the sign that the moment for action has come.*

ULYS. [*Rising.*] Lady, and princes, but to make you sport,
I will essay to bend Ulysses' bow :

[*Loud laughter.*

To make you sport—for I have supped full well.

ANTIN. Impudent rags! Thou shalt not vie with us.

TELEM. The beggar shall make trial : come, old man!

CTES. The old man! excellent!

ALL. [*Laughing loudly.*] The beggar man!

EURYM. Come forth, thou wooer lordliest and last.

ANTIN. Here is a broad mark for thy shaft, old man.

PEN. Ah, mock him not!

ULYS. Sirs, but to make you sport.

[*He totters towards the bow.*

Athene, strength! O if my might should fail me!

[*He takes the bow, and after simulated faltering strings it amid the amazed silence of the* SUITORS. *He springs to his height, and appears in his own likeness, his rags falling from him and disclosing him armed and in the full glory of manhood. He shoots, killing* ANTINOUS, *who falls.*

Dogs, do ye know me now?

PEN. [*Rushing towards him.*] Ulysses!

ULYS. Back!

[*The wicked* HANDMAIDS *fly huddling up the staircase into the women's quarters,* EURYCLEIA *pursuing them.*

SUITORS. [*Amazedly amongst themselves.*] Ulysses! is it he? Is it he—Ulysses?

EURYCL. I have seen the scar; 'tis he! O vengeance here!

ULYS. Who is for me? The swords there and the shields!

[TELEMACHIUS *and* EUMÆUS *snatch down the weapons, and arming* ULYSSES *and themselves, stand by him.*

EURYM. [*Coming over fawningly from among the* SUITORS *towards* ULYSSES.] Hero restored, I'll stand by thee for one!

ULYS. [*Striding out and spearing him.*] Would'st fawn on me? go fawn among the dead.

[EURYMACHIUS *falls. The* SUITORS, *finding no weapons on the walls, crowd waveringly together.*

CTES. [*Encouraging them.*] We are ten to one: crush, crush them by sheer weight.

[*The* SUITORS *make a headlong rush upon* ULYSSES *and his companions, but are stayed in mid rush by thunder, lightning, and supernatural*

darkness, followed by the apparition of ATHENE *standing by* ULYSSES.

SUITORS. The gods fight for him, fly! we are undone.

[ATHENE *and* ULYSSES *with* EUMÆUS *and* TELEMACHUS *fall on them, and they are driven in fierce brief medley, visible by flashes of lightning, and with noise of groans and falls, out headlong through the door. The darkness lifts, discovering* ULYSSES *standing on the threshold at the upper end of the hall,* ATHENE *still at his side He turns, laying by sword and shield, while* PENELOPE *gazes in passionate expectancy toward him from the corner of the hall.*

ULYS. [*Solemnly.*] First unto Zeus and to Athene praise!

Go all of you apart, even thou, my son,
And leave me with Penelope alone.

ATH. Thou art come home, Ulysses! Now farewell!
For violated laws are here avenged,
And I, who brought thee through those bitter years,
Those bitter years which make this moment sweet,
I, even, in this moment have no share.

[ATHENE *disappears.*

[ULYSSES *and* PENELOPE *slowly approach each other across the hall, with rapt gaze hesitatingly. Then she is folded to his breast in silence, while the voice of the* MINSTREL *is heard without, repeating the words of the song from the First Act, and the fire on the hearth, which has burnt low throughout this scene, leaps up into sudden brightness.*

NOTE BY THE AUTHOR.

THE methods and limitations of epic and drama differ completely: and in attempting to write a play on the story and character of Ulysses, as they are known to all the world from the Odyssey of Homer, the first thing needful is to sacrifice five-sixths at least of the episodes which give that poem its enchantment. Some writers who have made the attempt have even judged it best to omit the entire tale of the hero's wanderings, and to treat only those of his actions which take place after his return to Ithaca. Both M. Ponsard, in a lyrical drama written to Gounod's music, and Mr Robert Bridges, in his poetical play, 'The Return of Ulysses,' have followed this plan.

As the reader has perceived, I have gone farther back in the story, and taken in two of Ulysses' earlier trials, the sojourn with Calypso and the visit to Hades, which seemed to me to afford matter for telling dramatic presentment and dramatic contrast. And I have tried to weave these adventures, together with the return to Ithaca and the final discomfiture of the suitors, into the fabric of a properly-knit play; with what measure of success it must be for readers and playgoers to decide.

For the rest, the scholar will have found in the foregoing scenes some things strictly according to Homer, and some loosely so: but others not according to him at all, as for instance the stay with Calypso made to precede the descent among the dead instead of following it; Calypso herself endowed with some of the attributes of Circe; Athene appearing to Telemachus in her own garb and not in that of Mentor; Hermes, the chartered escort of the dead, given as a guide to Ulysses through

Hades; Hades itself conceived on lines which are Virgilian rather than Homeric; the ambush laid by the suitors against Telemachus transferred from sea to land; the two personages Phemius and Theoclymenus rolled into one; the action at the swineherd's hut, and that in the palace at Ithaca afterwards, re-arranged, re-imagined, and above all unsparingly accelerated and cut down. In the author's mind all these liberties were an essential part of his dramatic scheme; nor can the need for similar liberties be well escaped by any practical playwright who chooses to work upon materials supplied either by history or by epic.

As to the material presentment of the play, my warmest thanks are due to Mr Tree for an enthusiasm and a generosity which have admitted no obstacle in the attempt to realise on the stage the best conjectural picture of the Homeric world which could be devised. The attempt is new, and the result is a spectacle richer, more barbaric, many-coloured, and full of fantasy than could have been obtained by adopting the conventional classical costumes and familiar building styles of later Greece. The architecture and its decoration, designed by Prof. W. R. Lethaby, have been based on recent discoveries of the Mycenæan age. For the dresses (since the Mycenæan costume, so far as it is known to us, would be ill suited to the stage) Mr Percy Anderson has gone back to the very earliest Greek sculpture, and to vases of the sixth and seventh centuries B.C. Both these gentlemen, as well as the author and manager and their valued helper Mr Lionel Hart, have been greatly aided in their work by the zeal and learning of Dr A. S. Murray, Mr Sidney Colvin, and other friendly authorities of the British Museum.

S. P.

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